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Does Multimedia Technology Facilitate Pragmatics Awareness among Teenage Learners? A Case of Secondary-School Students

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Abstract

This study aims to raise awareness among teenage learners of the difference between direct and indirect "speech acts" in pragmatics through multimedia technology. In a case study with 35 participants between the ages of 13 and 15, the data-collection process consisted of pre-tests, multimedia technology, and post-tests. Pre- and post-tests comprised the same ten questions about speech acts. The participants engaged in explicit learning with a smart board and projector in order to understand the distinction between the direct and indirect speech act. The results indicate that the participants were able to grasp pragmatics awareness and that they were greatly motivated to learn through multimedia technology.

Keywords: Awareness, Pragmatics, Indirect, Direct, Speech Acts

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Multimedya Teknolojisi, Genç Yetişkin Öğrencilerin Edimbilim Bilincini Kolaylaştırır mı? Ortaokul Öğrencileri Örneği

Öz

Bu çalışmanın ana amacı, genç yetişkin öğrencilerin edimbilimdeki doğrudan ve dolaylı konuşma eylemleri arasındaki farkındalığı, multimedya teknolojisi araclığıyla kavramalarıdır. Bu çalışmada, yaşları 13 ile 15 arasında değişen 35 katılımcı vardır. Veri toplama araçları ön testler, multimedya teknolojisi ve son testlerdir. Ön testler ve son testler konuşma eylemleri hakkında aynı 10 soruyu içerir. Katılımcılar, ana farklılıkları ve konuşma türlerini iyice kavrayabilsin diye aynı anda çalışan bir akıllı tahta ve projektörden ders aldılar. Sonuçlar, katılımcıların edimbilim bilincini kavrayabildiğini gösterdi ve öğrenme aktivitelerini multimedya teknolojisiyle yürütmek için büyük bir oranda motivasyonları olmuştur.

Anahtar sözcükler: Farkındalık, Edimbilim, Dolaylı, Doğrudan, Konuşma Eylemleri

1. INTRODUCTION

The ability to ascertain whether speech acts are direct or indirect indicates competence in the use of a target language. Li (1986) states that both direct and indirect speech acts are crucial in grasping the core of utterances in the target language; however, most secondary school students cannot grasp distinguish between them, which is why most of them cannot learn the core of the target language. Instead, they focus on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

It is also important for learners to be aware of implied meanings. In most language classes, teachers do not focus on pragmatic issues—another significant area of language learning (Al Tarawneh, 2015; Arıkan & Yılmaz, 2020). It may be more fruitful to engage with pragmatic issues to promote effective communication in the target language; however, as already stated, the prime focus in teaching has generally been on grammar, phonology, structure, syntax, semantics, etc. (Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998; Cohen, 2008; Jianda, 2007; Toscu, 2019). When pragmatic topics such as useful expressions are taught, the main aim is to develop pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Murray, 2010). In order to impart a practical level of achievement in the target language, it is important to utilize specific language-teaching processes, such as interactive practice, effective control skills in communication, and awareness-raising (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991 ;Tanaka, 1997). This study deals with the pragmatic aspects of teaching and learning with a focus on speech acts in communication. The theory of speech acts was first asserted in 1962 by John Austin, who stated that a speech act always has a function in communication;

hence, learners should be aware of speech acts in order to achieve ironclad knowledge and enhance communication in the target language. Austin (1962) also claimed that we cannot classify sentences as true or false utterances, as the formulation of a sentence constitutes the performance of an action. That is why sentences are perceived of as "performatives."

Teaching speech acts, a significant pragmatic element; they aid learners in making clear utterances in the target language. In this study, types of speech acts—including assertion, question, order, and request in direct or indirect forms—were taught to the participants using multimedia technology. Technological tools have many functions that can help awaken students' curiosity and motivation. Additionally, teaching becomes more productive and has a real mediating effect when enhanced by the active participation of all students (Jones & Issroff, 2005). The application of multimedia and online technology in foreign-language teaching is quite useful, as they help to develop authentic tasks for language learning, boost the characteristic aspects of language teaching, and fulfill language skills (Hongling, 2010).

Multimedia gadgets, such as cameras or recorders (Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998), supply many sources for input (e.g., speech-act content) and analysis of the studies in EFL contexts and help cater to a wide range of learning styles. Some learners are able to learn via listening devices, some benefit from visual teaching aids, and others learn most effectively by using their senses in class; hence, instructors attempt to use various teaching methods to meet their students' needs. Thanks to multimedia tools, they have more interactive and stimulative classrooms (Atadi-Kuzucu & Kartal, 2020; Rohrer, Pashler, McDaniel, & Bjork, 2008).

Cohen (2008) argues that teachers need technology both inside and outside of the classroom. This way, they can facilitate the learning of pragmatics remotely through videos, sketches, websites, role-playing stories, and practice sessions. Multimedia technology often acts as a great facilitator—it boosts learners' capacities and helps them achieve their aims. Multimedia technology is considered influential in the development of student knowledge about the speech acts of pragmatics.

It is obvious that multimedia has become significant in teaching due to its practical and sensible modern tools. Multimedia tools generally serve various functions that make language teaching more meaningful than traditional methods of teaching. They boost student enthusiasm and help activities run smoothly thanks to functions that create authentic visual and audio effects that tie into real-life situations. Mao (2010) claimed that this technology prospers because both students and teachers can interact with one another in a easy manner; it enhances the quality of class, provides authentic materials, and supports bonds between teachers and students through teaching reflections and other supportive elements. There is

also evidence that multimedia technology plays a crucial role in the development of social bonds between human beings, as it provides a sense of socio-cultural context for the target language (Kramsch, 1999).

Multimedia in the teaching of speech acts in English classes has numerous advantages and potent uses. It encourages students to learn the target language in a way that aligns with their interests; it enables a student-centered teaching model that raises their expectations of fulfillment and provides more data in a short period of time (Mayer, 1997). Most studies show that multimedia is an effective tool in the teaching of speech acts; it helps enhance student ability to differentiate between direct and indirect speech acts.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

Both qualitative and quantitative research designs are used in this study. Qualitative research design provides a large amount of meaningful data based on deep analysis of natural settings (Lincoln & Denzin, 2008). Quantitative research design serves to provide numeric values as percentages by analyzing t-tests. Additionally, it compares the findings of the two tests in order to cross-validate the results The purpose of comparative research is to collect some data about one or all of the oral aspects compared in a study. Lastly, factor analysis is used for each question in the tests; students' answers in both pre- and post-tests are evaluated individually. The main aim of these analyses is to understand to what extent the use of multimedia enhances learners' knowledge of direct and indirect speech acts of pragmatics.

2.2 Participants

This study includes 35 participants, many of whom are bilingual with Kurdish as their native language. The participants are male and female eighth-grade students between the ages of 13 and 15 in southeast Turkey. Data was collected from two separate classes, labeled A and B. These students have been learning English for four years. Some of the participants are rather proficient in English. Some, however, still do not have very satisfactory English, only slightly above average; these students have had fairly poor English education in their primary schools on account of a lack of English teachers.

2.3 Instrument

The instruments in this study are a smart board, a projector, t-tests, and classroom observations for data collection.

Smart boards are now available in almost all public schools to encourage interaction. They are widely used because both teachers and students can use them to view videos relevant to the course, write for everyone to see, and listen to various tasks. Additionally, these smart boards can easily share information from the board directly to students' tablets; this makes learning both interactive and efficient for learners. This is the result of a famous ongoing initiative known as the "Fatih Project," which facilitates learning through technology in Turkey. FATIH stands for "Fırsatları Artırmave Teknolojiyi İyileştirme Hareketi (FATİH)," which means "movement to increase opportunities and improve technology." Thanks to this project, many schools in southeast Turkey have three boards in each classroom: white board, black board, and smart board. Projectors serve to reflect information from the teacher's computer or tablet to the wall or board in order to provide authentic English-language materials through both audibly and visually (Gilakjani, 2012). In this study, information is projected onto the wall via image or video by the projector.

The t-test is an important tool in analysis. For this study, students took two identical 10-item tests about direct and indirect speech acts, once prior to the implementation of the study and once following the implementation. This data collection tool enabled us to analyze the results from before and after our initiative.

A researcher can develop a greater understanding through observation that entails deep and focused attention during the data-collection process. This is especially important fort his study, as video recordings, which would enable teachers to look back at the whole process (Stein, 2000), are not permitted in Turkish public schools. Observation in this study plays a critical role, as information on how students' views and manners vary between traditional and multimedia teaching methods will yield significant results.

2.4 Procedure and Data Analysis

The study took three weeks to implement. During the first week, all 35 participants took a pre-test comprising 10 items about speech acts. Each item in the pre-test asked participants to define the function and type of speech acts of pragmatics. There were four choices—assertion, question, order, and request—and students were also asked to write either "D" for direct speech acts or "ID" for indirect speech acts. The aim of this pre-test was to get a preliminary view of students' ability to differentiate between direct and indirect speech acts. During the second week, teachers instructed their students explicitly on direct and indirect speech acts of pragmatics using multimedia technology. There were two screens functioning at the same

time in the class; the first was the smart board installed by the Turkish Ministry of National Education and the second was the projector reflected on the wall. On the smart board, located on the right side of the classroom, there were exercises and explanations of direct and indirect speech acts while the projector on the left side of the classroom displayed videos and pictures of these speech acts being applied in real-life communication. All of the relevant functions, including assertion, question, order, and request, were detailed. During the third and final week, the participants took the post-test, which was identical to the pre-test.

Qualitative and quantitative analyses were both conducted in this study. The study was conducted with two groups. Observations about participants and the classroom atmospheres during the second week were analyzed qualitatively; we sought to ascertain the students' motivations, feelings, thoughts, inferences, reasoning skills, and degrees of engagement. However, the results from the pre- and post-tests were analyzed quantitatively with each individual question being evaluated with factor analysis, through which researchers could decide on whether participants had worked thoroughly and understood the material.

3. FINDINGS

This section goes over findings related to demographic information, implementation, and questionnaire results. Of the 35 participants, 19 were male and 16 were female. The participants were between 13 and 15 years old; ten participants were 13, fifteen participants were 14, and three participants were 15. In terms of nationality, all of the participants were Turkish. However, 29 of them spoke Kurdish as their native language; the rest spoke Turkish as their native language. Regardless all of the participants were bilingual.

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

Number of Participants: 35				
Age	**13**	**14**	**15**	**Total**
	10	15	3	35
Gender	**Male**	**Female**		
	19	16		35
Nationality	**Turkish**	**Other**		
	35	0		35

Native Language	**Turkish**	**Kurdish**	
	6	29	35

Most of the students gave wrong answers on the pre-test, as they did not have sufficient knowledge about indirect and direct speech acts in pragmatics. The table below details the students' answers to each question in the pre-test.

Table 2. Students' answers on the pre-test.

Function of the Speech Acts			**Type of Speech Acts as D/ID**	
	Right	***Wrong***	***Right***	***Wrong***
Q1	10	25	12	23
Q2	8	27	14	21
Q3	11	24	15	20
Q4	10	25	10	25
Q5	17	18	15	20
Q6	14	21	8	27
Q7	11	24	15	20
Q8	10	25	13	22
Q9	9	26	12	23
Q10	10	25	15	20
TOTAL	**110**	**240**	**129**	**221**

It is clear that the number of wrong answers exceeds the number of correct answers. There were ten items in the pre-test with a total of 700 possible answers, as students needed to define both the function and type of speech acts—there were 239 correct answers and 461 incorrect answers. We conducted a factor analysis in order to evaluate the pre-test questions individually. On the first question, ten participants, or 28.57%, were able to define the correct

function of the speech compared to the 34.29% of students who correctly identified the type. On the second question, 22.86% of participants correctly identified the function while 40% correctly identified the type. About 31% identified the correct function and 42.9% identified the correct type on the third question. On the fourth question, 28.57% correctly identified both the function and type correctly. On the fifth question, about half of the participants selected the correct function but only 42.86% selected the correct type. On the sixth question, 40% correctly identified the function correctly while 22.86% correctly identified the type. On the seventh question, 31.43% of the participants found the correct function and 42.86% found the correct type. On the eighth question, 37.14% selected the correct function and 42.86% selected the correct type. On the ninth question, 25.71% answered correctly for both function and type. On the last question, 28.57% correctly identified the function while 42.86% correctly identified the type. None of these questions saw a success rate over 50%.

Our analysis of the second week was qualitative in nature. Through observation of students' in-class actions and motivations, we found that multimedia technology was effective in developing visual and audio skills because it allowed for detailed images and videos. Additionally, some students actually enjoyed their multimedia courses because they felt as though they were watching television. Students exhibited higher levels of motivation and participation; they understood all of their tasks thanks to the facilitating role of multimedia technology. Multimedia tools also served to develop critical thinking and analysis skills. Additionally, students were able to improve multiple intelligences during the second week.

Table 3. Students' answers on the post-test.

Function of the Speech Acts					**Type of Speech Acts as D/ID**			
	Right	***%***	***Wrong***	***%***	***Right***	***%***	***Wrong***	***%***
Q1	10	52,60	9	47,40	11	57,86	8	42,14
Q2	11	57,86	8	42,14	12	63,12	7	36,88
Q3	10	52,60	9	47,40	13	68,38	6	31,62
Q4	10	52,60	9	47,40	14	73,64	5	26,36
Q5	12	63,12	7	36,88	10	52,60	9	47,40
Q6	13	68,38	6	31,62	11	57,86	8	42,14
Q7	11	57,86	8	42,14	11	57,86	8	42,14
Q8	10	52,60	9	47,40	10	52,60	9	47,40

Q9	11	57,86	8	42,14	13	68,38	6	31,62
Q10	10	52,60	9	47,40	10	52,60	9	47,40
TOTAL	**108**		**82**		**115**		**75**	

Table 3 displays students' answers on the post-test. It is clear that the rate of correct answers for both function and type is higher than it was on the pre-test.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research was conducted with a sample of 35 male and female eighth-grade students between the ages of 13 and 15 in southeast Turkey.

The study was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, all participants took a pre-test. In the second stage, students were taught about speech acts in pragmatics through the use of multimedia technology. In the last stage, all participants took a post-test. After comparing the pre- and post-test results, we found that the rate of correct answers increased following our intervention. This finding made it clear that some of the participants developed their knowledge of direct and indirect speech acts thanks to the integration of multimedia technology; it played an important role in enhancing the ability of teenage learners to differentiate between direct and indirect speech acts in pragmatics. Additionally, students appeared to be more eager and motivated in the classroom while engaging with multimedia technology. It made learning both easier and more enjoyable through the use of colorful images and videos. These results would likely apply to many kinds of students varying in age and language proficiency; future research should sample a wide range of participants from different backgrounds, levels, and institutions in order to draw reliable, broadly applicable conclusions.

We found that the students who increased their knowledge following our intervention also developed more successful communication skills, as they could use the target language more conventionally and define their speech in accordance with context. The use of multimedia technology also helped students develop their skills of deduction, analysis, and reasoning.

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